

SENSE & SENSITIVITY

She's worried about safety in the city

DEAR HARRIETTE: I was followed recently by a man as I walked home around midnight (yes, I know it was late, but I was coming home from work). I know that he was following me because I didn't go directly to my house. I crossed the street and walked around the block pretty much in a circle and he remained behind me. He kept a distance, about 20 feet, but I could tell he was there. Finally, I was able to walk into a large group of people, at which point the man turned and went back in the direction he'd come from. I'm OK, but how can I prepare myself in case this happens again? Should I buy a taser or mace?

— Sophie, Boston

Sophie: In a moment when you could have panicked you acted wisely. Don't apologize or feel bad about being out late. Susan Bartelstone, a personal safety specialist and founder of the Safety Solutions

Company, explains how important it is to know that "the victim cannot be blamed for these situations, but it is your responsibility to be able to protect yourself as you live an active city life."

Here are some guidelines from Bartelstone on how to protect

yourself: Be alert and aware of your surroundings, so you will be able to notice that you're being followed. Go with your instincts. Change directions, cross the street, just as you did. Try to lose him before you go home. You don't want this person to know where you live. Going into a group of people is a great idea. Don't leave the group until this person is gone. Find an open store, a building with a security guard or doorman or another public place and wait.

As far as deterrents go, tasers are illegal. Pepper spray can be found at camping supply stores, online, in catalogues and in hardware stores. Buy two canisters and practice with one. It must be easily accessible (in your hand or pocket). Take a personal safety workshop. Know that women may want to harm you, too, and though someone appears harmless, there's always a chance you could be an unsuspecting victim if you aren't prepared. For further support, visit www.fightsafe.com.

DAILY NEWS

Thursday, October 9, 2003

HARRIETTE COLE



Susan Bartelstone
Personal Safety Specialist
www.fightsafe.com